'Postmodernising' Security

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Introduction - The Renaissance of Security Studies

Writing in 1991, Stephen Walt in a now famous article anticipated a 'Renaissance of Security Studies'. He was right about it, albeit for all the wrong reasons. His endorsement of the field was based on its allegedly firm foundations, theoretical convergence, policy relevance and the triumph of proper scholarship over ideological commitments within it. In order to safeguard this overall encouraging state of the art, Walt warns explicitly against the seduction of 'post-modern' approaches which could only lead the field astray 'into a prolix and self-indulgent discourse that is divorced from the real world' (Walt, 991:223).

Postmodernists (if we for the moment accept this denomination) would probably agree with Walt's admonishment that matters of war and peace are too important too be left to a discipline that conducts its 'research' in a world of mystery and imagination. The irony here, however, is that this equally well describes their attitude towards the empiricist/realist methodology upon which Walt predicates proper IR scholarship. As Krause and Williams have convincingly demonstrated, neorealist scholarship depends on a number of highly problematic (and consequently rarely discussed) epistemological and ontological assumptions (Krause and Williams, 1997). The simplistic affirmations of a research program dealing with the 'real world', which is obviously inhabited by pre-fabricated 'states' add up to, to paraphrase Walt, 'mostly mythology and not much theory'.

If there is indeed a renaissance in Security Studies, this is thanks to the proliferation of critical engagements with neorealism and its spin-offs. While realists continue to squeeze 'real world' events into the rigid structures of its 'parsimonious' theorizing,[1] 'Critical Security Studies' has developed into a theoretically sophisticated, and empirically rich, sub-discipline.

Within this newly emerging field, post modern approaches mark the most radical edge

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[1] Perhaps the best example of this is Barry Posen's attempt to account for disintegration of Yugoslavia in neorealist terms, see Posen (1993).

and opposition to conventional approaches. In a more moderate fashion, Critical Security Studies contains also more modest challenges to neorealist theorizing such as demands to expand the concept of security to cover such matters as the environment or the economy. Other scholars have introduced the notions of intersubjectivity and social constructivism into the sub-discipline. Together, these developments have thoroughly undermined the neorealist hegemony in Security Studies and contributed to a more productive and fruitful discussion, a discussion which even appears now and then in the pages of the Security Studies central organ, *International Security*.

One should, however, emphasise, that the 'expansionist' and the 'constructivist' critiques remain ultimately limited ones, in that they share most of neorealism's (problematic) metatheoretical commitments. Thus, as Alex Wendt explicitly states, 'Constructivists ... are modernists who fully endorse the scientific project of falsifying theories against evidence' (Wendt, 1995:75).

As some scholars have observed, the most significant epistemological divide unites rationalists and modernist constructivists against post-modernists. Usually, the line is drawn in terms of the respective camp's attitude towards the decidability of scientific truth claims (Risse-Kappen in CSS, pp. 255-6; Adler, 1997). For the sake of this paper, I shall dramatise the dividing line as follows: whereas modernist scholars (including constructivists) conceptualise security as referring to a pre-existing entity and its enemies, post-modern scholars reverse this order, arguing that 'security' *produces* these entities. To be sure, this is a simplification bordering on caricature, yet it does capture the central issue relevant for the present essay.

In the next section I shall elaborate on this central topic within Critical Security Studies, setting off the more radical (postmodern) approach from the more moderate (modernist) one. The third section will deal with the question of how to interpret the relationship between security, sovereignty, and statehood. Carl Schmitt's work on the concept of the Political is at the centre of this part. Section four sets out to formulate a set of commitments based on postmodern reflections and findings, which could serve as the 'script' of a 'postmodern' security politics. The final section will attempt to answer the

perennial question usually launched against such contemplation: 'so what?'

Security, the Political and the State

To redefine Security is to redefine the Political and hence the State.[2] This is so, because Security is the script according to which the Political is institutionalised (i.e., performed) in the State. To re-write Security thus effects changes within the structure and organisation of the entities it constitutes.

This productive role of Security vis-à-vis the State is something that eludes modernist theories of IR - and is at the centre of postmodern approaches. In the following, this claim will be further substantiated by focusing on the social constructivist 'statist' treatment of 'security'.

To argue that neorealism is 'statist' is hardly a new insight.[3] To argue the same about Social Constructivism is perhaps more contentious and requires further explanation.

For all its talk about the construction of social reality, this approach as formulated by Wendt, Adler, Risse-Kappen, and Wæver in fact emulates rationalist ontology by assuming the unproblematic existence of states.

Perhaps the clearest formulation in this respect is offered in Alexander Wendt's distinction between the social and the corporate identity of states.

> *Corporate* identity refers to the intrinsic qualities that constitute actor individuality. For people this means the body and personal experience of consciousness; for organizations it means their constituent individuals and the shared beliefs and institutions in virtue of which those individuals can act as a "we" (Wendt, 1997:50-1; emphasis in original).

The corporate identity of states, Wendt continues, generates several basic interests or 'appetites' which can be paraphrased as

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[2] The concepts with capital letters are meant to relate to a generalised, abstract notion as opposed to the empirical reality of their instantiations.

[3] Even when attempting to describe the behaviour of other entities, such as civilisations (Huntington), or ethnic groups (Posen), neorealism assumes the prior existence of such entities and re-establishes the derivative nature of security.

(1) physical security

(2) ontological security through stable social identities

(3) social recognition as an actor

(4) development and welfare (Wendt, 1997:51)

Processes of social identity formation are based upon and reflect these pre-social characteristics. The constitution of statehood itself, the (re-)production of political spaces is therefore outside the conceptual and theoretical boundaries of this model (Cederman and Daase, 1998). Security is consequently about the maintenance and preservation of these pre-social entities. At its worst, states find themselves in a Hobbsean security structure characterized exclusively by the involved states' 'self-interest'; at its best, states are able to 'construct' a 'collective identity' and become able to produce a 'positive identification with the welfare of another, such that the other is seen as the cognitive extension of the Self rather than as independent' (Wendt, 1997:52).

It is interesting to observe that 'sovereignty' becomes a factor in the 'transformation' of identities from egoistic to collective. Again in Wendt's words, 'to the extent that states successfully internalise sovereignty norms, they will be more respectful toward the territorial rights of others. (Wendt, 1992:414). States, in other words, predate sovereignty, and the latter becomes an intervening norm in the determination of states behaviour. Thus, while sovereignty is introduced into the debate, it is at the same time relegated to a secondary, derivative status. Statehood itself remains an unproblematised presence. Sovereignty can only 'transform understandings of security and power', after being 'internalised' by states, making them 'more respectful towards the territorial rights of others'. (Wendt, 1992:414).

Emanuel Adler's and Thomas Risse-Kappen's contribution to the Social Constructivist debate on security can be identified as a further specification of the conditions under which states find it able to 'construct' a collective rather than egoistic security structure. In both cases, the basic nature of states remains unaffected by processes of social

construction. Moreover, whatever such processes take place presuppose and draw upon pre-social characteristics of states. More specifically, according to Adler, 'security communities' can only emerge among liberal democratic states. In it only these states that can have a 'shared practical knowledge of the peaceful resolution of conflicts' (Adler, 1997:257). Within 'totalitarian' communities 'where ideologies consecrate state goals and condone every possible means that can lead to the achievement of these goals' this knowledge and trust is absent, hence these states will most likely be unable to engage in a security relations beyond a Hobbsean state of nature.

In a similar fashion, Risse-Kappen accounts for the formation of a security community through the symbolic interaction of liberal states who take 'the values and norms governing the domestic political processes that shape the identities of their partners' as a signifier for their amicable orientations and intentions (Risse Kappen, 1996: 367). The social identities of the members of such a community are thus constructed out of the cognition of other member states' internal democratic or liberal identity. This identity itself, however, is localized within the corporate identity, since it antedates the encounter and social interaction of the community members. The social construction of identity is thus reduced to a process of cognising pre-given identities, to a parochial 'getting to know each other'. The 'West' as the relevant security community is, according to Risse-Kappen nothing more than the sum of liberal states, without any constitutive role of its own. NATO's fate at the end of the cold war is sealed simply by the persistence of liberal democracies in the West: as long as there are liberal states, there will be an Atlantic Alliance.

A security community thus only ratifies the pre-given identity of its member states. Processes of 'social construction' are hence neither social, nor about 'construction'.[4] They cannot be social in that they do not draw on social, i.e., intersubjectively shared cultural and political resources in order to establish identities. Nor do they construct anything beyond a proper understanding and acknowledgment of each member state's pre-social identity.

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[4] For an elaboration of this argument see Behnke (1998b)

Security as a political concern and process is concomitantly referred to the outside of such community. Insecurity as a political condition is only prevalent in the relations between non-democracies, and between democracies and non-democracies. Security politics as a means to mediate between identity and difference, as a way to establish the former through the designation of the latter is not part of this paradigm. Again, Risse-Kappen's discussion of the West illustrates this point best. For him, the West is a cultural entity without an outside. Since it is internally constructed, it owes nothing to the outside. This absence of any kind of recognition to the debt owed to difference by identity is also reflected in the assertion of the West's inherent boundlessness:

> The end of the Cold War, then, not only does not terminate the Western community of values, it extends that community into Eastern Europe and, potentially, into even the successor states of the Soviet Union, creating a "pacific federation" of liberal democracies from Vladivostok to Berlin, San Francisco, and Tokyo (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 396).

At the end of this development stands a truly 'utopian' West, a space without a place, without boundaries that delineate and define its identity. Security ceases to be a concern, for within such community, the Political, that is, conflict and 'agony' have been abolished.

A final example of the relegation of security to a derivative and protective rather than productive concept is provided by the so-called Copenhagen School around Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. Here the reification of the referent objects of security - environmental, economic, societal, political 'sectors' - into pre-given entities is defended in an intellectually rather doubtful fashion (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998).[5] The argument offered basically acknowledges the 'constructed' nature of the referent entities, yet continues by defending their reification into 'sedimented' and 'petrified', or 'thingish' objects. In other words, once 'constructed', entities can be ascertained, described, and analysed as 'relatively stabilised' referents of security (Buzan and

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[5] Also, it remains ultimately unclear what these sectors are sectors *of*. The state itself as the most obvious choice is itself the referent of political security.

Wæver, 1997:243).

The problem with this kind of argument is that it reduces the 'social construction' of reality to a mere window-dressing. Unless this very construction is addressed as a relevant process, any acknowledgment is an empty gesture.

The Buzan/Waever argument also illustrates a further problem inherent in the discourse on social construction, namely the misunderstanding of construction as a limited and period in time, rather than as a reiterative performance of discursive structures. To introduce metaphors of sedimentation, petrifaction, or 'thingishness' blinds Social Constructivism to the performative nature of social 'reality'.[6] As Jef Huysmans (1995) has argues, there is a tendency in this research programme to sanction and support the 'securitisation' of immigrants within host societies by unproblematically re-presenting them as aliens and potential threats, while remaining silent on the noxious processes through which this identity is actually *produced*.

To sum up: while Social Constructivism has presented itself as a major alternative to rationalist or realist theories of international politics it still reproduces a number of problematic ontological commitments to pre-given entities and identities. Within this framework, security appears as a derivative, and conservative force. It ratifies and sanctions homogenous and stabilised insides, while referring difference and contingency to the outside.

Postmodern notions of security reverse the order between security and the states (or the 'West', for that matter). Security is now conceived of as the process or performance through which these entities are established. Ironically enough, it did not take a post-modernist to drive this point home.

A Schmittean reading of Security - Sovereignty - State

To refer to Carl Schmitt's work on 'The Concept of the Political' allows us to do two things. Firstly, we can establish the productive role of 'security' in relation to the state.

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[6] A similar problematic rendition can be found in Dessler (1989). For a good problematisation of constructivists notion of agency and structure, see Butler (1993).

Secondly, we can appreciate according to what script this production is performed in modern times and what problems this constitutes for postmodern politics.

For Schmitt, 'the concept of the state presupposes the concept of the Political' (1991:20). Statehood is a political phenomenon and product, and thus cannot be considered unproblematic. Which leads to the question about the nature of the Political. The answer Schmitt offers is as straightforward as its repercussions complex: 'the specifically political distinction on which political actions and purposes are based is the distinction between Friend and Enemy' (1991:26). Whereas morals deals in good and evil, aesthetics in beautiful and ugly, economics in costs and benefits, the space of politics is defined by the inclusion/exclusion of social communities. The distinction between Friend and Enemy is moreover independent of the other distinctions,

> it can exist theoretically and empirically without referring to all those moral, aesthetic, economic, or other distinctions. The political Enemy does not have to be morally evil, he does not have to be aesthetically displeasing; he does not have to appear as an economic competitor, it might even be advantageous to engage in commerce with him (1991: 27).

At the end of the day, the Enemy is simply the Other, the alien, the outsider which defines the boundaries of 'our' community. Statehood is based on the definition and delineation of such community - a state is always a state *of* or *for* some community. Within the state politics as a 'secondary' or derived concept of the Political can take place: social politics, economic politics, education politics and so on (1991:30). Political order, in other words, is based on a violent decision about the distinction between Friend and Enemy, Inside(r) and Outside(r). This decision, moreover is constantly reproduced in even the most mundane of political and administrative routines in as much as these practices involve and apply to the established community.

The Political is thus an inherently agonistic concept, constantly involving explicit or implicit decisions about the line between 'us' and them'. 'To view the state as the settled and orderly administration of territory, concerned with the organisation of its

affairs according to law, is to see only the stabilised results of conflict' (Hirst, 1987:17).

A number of objections might be raised against Schmitt's definition of the Political. One might easily reject it as too aggressive and bellicose, or for reducing politics to a conflict to the death between political entities. In this 'realist' reading of Schmitt, we might surmise that states are caught up in an anarchical 'state of war', in which the absence of any kind of order pits states against each other in eternal antagonism. One might then point out that peaceful relationships between states are a reality, and that the peaceful nature of these relationships have been institutionalized within, for example, the European Union. This argument would point out that in some parts of the world the logic of enmity has been transcended, and while states still incorporate different identities, this difference can no longer be described in terms of hostility or conflict.

In a sense, this criticism makes both too much and too little out of Schmitt's definition of the Political. It makes too much out of it, since the friend-enemy distinction is not supposed to describe the empirical reality of states' relations. War between states appears as only the ultimate possibility in a broad spectrum of political choices and strategies. It defines a *Grenzbedingung*, a liminal condition against which international politics has to be conducted, but it does not determine the forms and modes of politics as such.

At the same time, the criticism makes in fact too little of Schmitt's distinction. Since it operates on the ontological rather than empirical level, it cannot be reduced to an enumeration of political relationships between states. Such relationships already presuppose the distinction between friend and enemy to be made. Peaceful negotiations between states consequently rest on a prior agreement about the distinction - and on an assumption that this distinction itself remains non-negotiable. Against the 'realist' reading, it is important to emphasise that in order to be a constitutive act, the distinguishing between friend and enemy constitutes an *agonistic* rather than antagonistic relationship. This distinction is crucial indeed. For Schmitt, the identification of the enemy, of another political entity, involves the recognition of equality between these entities. The other is not a foe, an adversary that has to be

conquered, converted, or annihilated. As an enemy, the other is recognized as an equal, and while war is always a possibility between enemies, this war is always 'circumscribed' (*eingehegt*), regulated, and part of an overall order. As such, the relationship should be considered agonistic, 'in which each opposes the other (and the other's presumptive beliefs) while respecting the adversary at another level' (Connolly, 1991:178) as an equal. This formalisation of enmity is exactly aimed against the antagonistic relationship of foes with its tendency to total, terminal conflict. In order to be Political, in order to constitute the 'units of the international system', the distinction between friend and enemy must establish order rather than chaos.

One might then suggest a re-formulation of the 'friend-enemy' distinction into a more neutral 'identity\difference' semantic structure, arguing that the individuation and constitution of political spaces can be accomplished by less bellicose mediations. Yet this in turn would, to my mind, underestimate the debt owed by national and trans-national identities to discourses of enmity, danger and threat. The reason for this is not that we cannot imagine difference in any other way than threatening. Neighbours, collegues, and co-workers might very well define each other as different, yet without any reference to threat and danger. What is absent from the social spaces and localities they inhabit, however, is what defines and constitutes political space in the international system: sovereignty. In order to understand the role of authority and power in the negotiation of identity and difference in the international system, we need to recall that the drawing of the boundaries between inside and outside, and thus the establishment of a political space can never be referred to any anterior feature of nature or history. It is ultimately a contingent, indeed arbitrary act, never born out of necessity. As the work of Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and others have demonstrated, the claim that a nation, or a particular identity of a people can serve as the legitimate reference for the 'nation-state' and its institutional practices is unwarranted. It would assume that the reality of a nation would precede a Schmittean decision and deny the role of power in the designation of identity and demarcation of space. Yet in the absence of any

natural or intrinsic identity, power is always inscribed in the relation an exclusive identity bears to the differences it constitutes. *If* there is always a discrepancy between the identities a society makes available and that in human being which exceeds, resists, or denies those possibilities, then the claim to a true identity is perpetually plagued by the shadow of the other it constitutes (Connolly, 1991:66).

If identities are always the product of ultimately arbitrary choices, they can be contested, denied and rejected. Alternative modes of identities, alternative framing of spaces can be offered, denying the truth claim by any one authorized version. Yet to the *sovereign* gaze, this contest of identities is unacceptable. For only if the identity authorized from a sovereign position remains undisputed can it remain sovereign. Any 'attempt to pluralise and politicise identities militates against achievement of the highest good' (Connolly, 1991:66). In order for the sovereign position to 'secure itself as intrinsically good, coherent, complete or rational and in order to protect itself from the other that would unravel its self-certainty and capacity for collective mobilization if it established its legitimacy', the very mode of being different is a threat, an enemy to sovereignty (Connolly, 1991:65-6).

In a system in which universalist claims meet in a pluralist setting, in which absolute claims are decided by the relativity of power, difference is thus driven into enmity. For a state to compromise on its identity would mean its death. To contest a political identity is thus a declaration of war - Yugoslavia being only the most violent case in point. Schmitt's definition of the Political and its intrinsic relationship with sovereignty thus describes an inherent tension in the international system between the plurality of political orders and the universality of their respective truth-claims.[7]

What should become clear from the above is that 'Security' is more than a goal or a 'policy' of pre-established states versus pre-established threats. 'Security' is, first of all about the very designation and delineation of the state and, therefore, its enemies. 'Security', in other words, produces the state as an institutionalised community in

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[7] The 'spill-over' of the latter into the international arena is problematised by Schmitt in terms of 'discriminatory concepts of war', see Schmitt (1988 [1938]).

opposition to other states. Security politics are thus not simply about the protection of ontologically unproblematic entities, rather, we should think of them as the reiterative performance of statehood (Weber, 1998).

Secondly, we can begin to understand the particular modernist 'ontotheology' that is effective in the script for this performance. In James Der Derian's words,

> We have inherited an *ontotheology* of security, that is, an *a priori* argument that proves the existence and necessity of only one form of security because there currently happens to be a widespread, metaphysical belief in it' (Der Derian, 1995:25).

Der Derian continues by tracing this ontotheology to a central commitment within Western philosophy - the notion of a 'centre' as a 'site from which the forces of authority, order, and identity philosophically defined and physically kept at bay anarchy, chaos, and difference' (1995:25).

Within modern Western political theory, sovereignty has been the central concept through which this centre is established and recognised. Schmitt's deliberations about the concept of the Political are topical here because they allow is to appreciate the internal relationships between security, sovereignty, and the state. Firstly, as noted above, 'security' as the set of practices that mediates between 'friend' and 'enemy' becomes constitutive and performative in the production of statehood. Moreover, in modern political theory, this distinction is the very one that is established by, and establishes, sovereignty. In Schmitt's words, 'sovereign is he who decides on the exception. Only this definition can do justice to sovereignty as a liminal concept (Grenzbegriff)' (Schmitt, 1996 [1922]: 13).[8] The political decision itself cannot be politicised, that is, it cannot be negotiated and made subject to the play of power and interest. Politics has to accept this decision as a constitutive truth. It can only enact and reproduce it. Sovereignty thus bestows a shell-like nature to statehood: within we find those who belong in this place, outside we find those who cannot be allowed in.

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[8] See also Schmitt (1991 [1932]: 27), '[Only the directly involved] can *decide*, whether the Otherness of the stranger entails the negation of their own existence' (emphasis added).

Outsiders on the inside are consequently guests at best, *Gastarbeiter* perhaps, or strangers whose status is by definition tenuous and contingent. The are 'displaced' persons, dwelling outside their designated areas, undermining the Political decision upon which sovereignty rests (Bauman, 1991, 53-74). As outsiders, they cannot be part of 'our' community, yet as insiders, as participants in our lives, they do not pose the existential threat to our being that we find beyond our political and conceptual borders. Modern security politics are predicated upon the possibility of drawing the line between inside and outside, friend and enemy in an unambiguous fashion. Or, perhaps more to the point, they authorise the policing of this line in order to eradicate any ambivalence that the decision about friend and enemy might engender. As such, they are part and parcel of the modern political project. As Bauman writes, 'the typical modern practice, the substance of modern politics, of modern intellect, of modern life, is the effort to exterminate ambivalence' (Bauman, 1991:7). Consequently, the inside, the community of 'friends' in Schmitt's terms, has to be made homogenous and secured in this fashion, so as not to allow the outside, the enemy, Otherness, to disintegrate it. 'The political unity must, if necessary, demand the sacrifice of life'[1932]: 70).

So much for the modern conceptions of security, the Political, and statehood. If the above sounds somewhat overdrawn and hyperbolised, this indicates, I would argue, that our *Lebenswelt* increasingly reflects the inadequacy and problematic nature of traditional Western security ontotheology. Strangers are all around us, transversal flows of people, commodities, information and services abound, globalisation is transcending political and conceptual boundaries. The world, in other words, has become a 'strange' place, with elements from different cultures and settings available in most parts of it.

Yet this does not mean that the modern ontotheology of security has vanished. Quite to the contrary I would contend that most of contemporary national and international security policies are still based on such a desire for a stable centre, that in other words the current prevalence of ambiguity causes a fundamental problem for Western strategic imagination. As a number of critical studies of security political discourses have demonstrated, security is still understood as the preservation and stabilization of

boundaries and identities through the identification of Otherness as (external) threat and danger (e.g., Behnke, 1998, Campbell, 1998; Neumann, 1999, Weldes and Saco, 1996) Perhaps the best way to illustrate the current predicament of Western security thinking is by reviewing the diagnosis offered by its most eminent representatives. Faced with a world increasingly out of sync with their valuations, the current situation becomes a dramatic pathology of international politics.

Post-modernity as Pathology - Huntington's mapping of nations and civilizations

On page 205 in Samuel Huntington's notorious 'Clash of Civilisations' we find a map of the United States, depicting the predicted 'ethnic' identity of the US population in the year 2020. According to this map, there will be a significant increase in the number of 'non-White', Black, Asian, Native American and Hispanic population in the States, turning it into a patch-work of identities, cultures and communities. Whether or not the numbers anticipate the future correctly is less relevant here than the general gist of this map: it depicts the 'post-modernisation' of American society and the proliferation of heterodox articulations of identity and cultural affiliation.[9] What has become virtually impossible is the performance of one hegemonic, dominant national identity and the resulting externalisation of alterity. The USA will be - and to a large extent already is - populated by 'strangers', by 'displaced persons'.

For Huntington this is a problem. What is at stake in these developments is 'whether ... America will become [a] cleft societ[y] encompassing two distinct and largely separate communities from two different civilisations, which in turn depends on the numbers of immigrants and the extent to which they are assimilated into the Western cultures prevailing in Europe and America' (Huntington, 1996:204). What is at stake, in other words, is the authoritative articulation of national identity, interest, and policy. A cleft country is a weak country, unable to muster the necessary purpose and power to defend

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[9] See also, Schlesinger (1992). Needless to say, this is not an American phenomenon exclusively. For the developments in Germany - a country notorious for its constitutionalised pretense of national homogeneity, see Böhm (1999).

its political and cultural integrity within the clash of civilisations.

Huntington's exposé is modestly innovative in so far as he applies the modern ontotheology of security not to the nation-state, but to 'civilisation', that is, clusters of states which share certain norms, values, and institutions. Consequently, his ultimate concern is about the perseverance of the West as a unique, unified and powerful civilisation. Thus the concern about the presence of Otherness in the USA (and in other, European, countries) translates into a concern about the viability of Western civilisation as a whole. 'Multiculturalism' as a way to come to terms with the presence of heterodox articulations of identity is dismissed as an 'onslaught from a small but influential number of intellectuals and publicists' against the core of Western civilisation (Huntington, 1996:305). The survival of the West will depend to a large extent on its ability to fend off such subversive tendencies and to preserve its traditional identity against the proliferation of Otherness.

The 'post-modernisation' of Western societies constitutes thus a major concern for traditional security thinking. In a sense, it has to admit failure: the enemy is already inside, disguised as a 'stranger', undermining our social and political cohesion. This diagnosis of course leads to the question of how to respond to this crisis. Depending on our philosophical inclinations, three answers are possible: to re-subject security to a Schmittean concept of the Political and thus to cleanse the contaminated space of aliens and strangers to the largest extent possible, to forsake the notion of security and argue for the 'desecuritisation' of the Political, or to 'post-modernise' security. After a brief review of the two former strategies, this paper will argue for the third.

Securing Security

If we are to insist on a Schmittean solution to political order, if we are, in other words, to insist on the sovereign decision between friend and enemy, then security needs to be secured. This is of course one of the purposes of Walt's article and his admonishments against expanding the concept of security into new areas and against giving in to the

temptations of postmodern prolixity. Indeed, Walt's aversion to postmodern approaches can be read as a rejection of the proliferation of voices and loyalties that transgress the sovereign boundaries of the Political, both in theory and in practice. Against this proliferation of ambiguity, discipline has to be re-established in order to salvage mastery over the political realm. As Krause and Williams formulate it, 'The security of the discipline, in this view, is made into an element - perhaps even a prerequisite - of security itself!' (Krause and Williams, 1997a:ix). Two sets of commitments are brought in by Walt in order to discipline the discipline, one an ontological commitment, the other epistemological. 'Security studies' he writes, 'assumes that conflict *between* states is always a possibility and that the use of military force has far-reaching effects on states and societies' (Walt, 1991:212; emphasis added); anarchy remains of enduring importance as a constraint on state behaviour (Walt, 1991:219). This, according to Walt, is what the world of international politics looks like. Postmodern approaches. he adds, simply fail to see this, since they are 'divorced from the real world' (Walt, 1991:223). Proper knowledge about the cold, hard, realities of national security can only be obtained by remaining within the conceptual and theoretical boundaries of realist Security studies. There is not enough space here to demolish the exceedingly heroic epistemological claims that Walt submits, moreover, this has been convincingly done by other authors (Krause and Williams, 1997b). What is more important here is the way in which Walt restores the internal relations between security, sovereignty and statehood. For the 'objective' knowledge supposedly produced by Security Studies is to be submitted to the sovereign as a means to facilitate his political agency.

> In general ... the research program of security studies is usually informed by debates over central policy problems and tends to address phenomena that can be controlled by national leaders. As a result, scholarship tends to concentrate on *manipulable variables*, on relationships that can be altered by deliberate acts of policy. Given that military power is the central focus of the field and is subject to political control, this tendency is appropriate (Walt, 1991:212).

Security Studies in the Waltian fashion is thus part and parcel of the effectiveness of the

sovereign policing of the boundary that establishes political order/statehood. The silencing of postmodern voices within the boundaries of the discipline is thus translated into the silencing of the strangers within the boundaries of the states. For by two simple sleights of hand - the reaffirmation of order versus anarchy, and the commitment to epistemic realism - Walt eliminates the carriers of ambiguity and displacement from the realist world picture, thus reasserting the Schmittean decision as the basis for modernist security. 'The neorealist vision of security effectively makes it synonymous with citizenship. Security comes from being a citizen, and insecurity from citizens of other states' (Krause and Williams, 1997b:43). Security, in Schmittean terms, only applies to the friends, the member of a (national) community, strangers cannot claim the same protection.

Now, as long as we can safely assume that each state is indeed only inhabited by its own citizens, as long as we could believe that the stranger is only the rare exception, this might be an acceptable way to conceptualise security. In post-modern times, however, in which transversal flows of people, culture, information and commodities proliferate, this notion of security becomes problematic. Indeed, it becomes paradoxical, for the pursuit of security renders people insecure. To pursue modernist security in postmodern times subjects an increasing number of people to an existential insecurity .

Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of the insecurity produced by the pursuit of national security is Bosnia, where the Muslim population, re-defined as the 'stranger' by Serbian authority, was 'ethnically cleansed'. The point here is not to claim that such treatment is unavoidable, rather that it is well within the logic of modernist politics and security. In a less noxious fashion, the status of the *Gastarbeiter* population in Germany remains a topical problem, as, in a related matter, does the status of Turkey in/versus Europe (Buzan and Diez, 1999).[10] Finally, Western representations of Bosnia are more often than not dominated by an identification of Muslim culture as something external and alien to Europe - thus effectively silencing the cultural articulation of some ten

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[10] The latter example also indicates that this modernist Schmittean security script is not confined to the nation-states as the exclusive political community. It illustrates how the West as a 'civilisation' is indebted to it as well. On the relationship between the West, security and modernity, see Dillon (1996).

million Muslims living within Europe (Behnke, 1998). As Milton Viorst has argued, this situation might very well mean that the 'clash of civilisations' 'may not take place at the frontiers where these cultures meet, but rather ... inside the borders of the Western states' (Viorst, 1996:96).

To insist on the on the Schmittean decision as the basis of our understanding of security is thus becoming increasingly problematic. The question then is how to respond to this production of insecurity through security.

To Securitise or De-securitise...

One might read Ole Wæver's contemplations about 'Securitisation-Desecuritisation' as a response to the contemporary problems that beset our notions of security. Security, Wæver argues, should be understood as a speech act, through which certain phenomena, actors, or events are designated as threats to the status and security of the state. In other words, 'security refers to the those cases where a threat or development is designated as incompatible with the state's sovereignty which leads to a test of will and force - thereby testing whether the state is a sovereign state' (Wæver, 1993:6) After all, 'the ability to fend off a challenge is the criterion for establishing oneself as a sovereign unit, forcing the others to recognise one's sovereignty and thereby gaining identity' (Wæver, 1993:6).

To designate a 'threat', to label actors enemies is thus the defining characteristic of the sovereign. As such, it also permits him to refer to all means necessary to avert the threat, to expel or defeat the enemy, including the exercise of violence. Security is thus in fact contingent upon insecurity, it is the designation of the latter that enables the state to act in pursuit of the former. Security as such is therefore always itself a violent intervention, and not a pacific state of affairs. Moreover, since 'exceptional' means are legitimised through sovereign self-authorisation, securitised issues are removed from the play of politics as such. Securitised issues are not to be settled by the political play of equal political actors, rather, the point of securitisation is to remove issues and actors

from the political realm (Wæver, 1993:8). As threats and dangers, they are to be relegated to the 'outside' of the political community.

Given the intrinsic linkage between security and sovereignty, Wæver ends up arguing for 'de-securitisation' as the proper strategy for solving issues of security. 'Transcending a security problem, politicising a problem can therefore not happen through thematisation in terms of security, only away from it' (Wæver, 1993:8). Politicisation here refers to both the designation of an issue as 'un-exceptional' and its treatment within (democratic) political processes, rather than through exceptional measures. In order to safeguard an issue (or actor) from the grasp of sovereignty, it needs to be removed from the conceptual realm defined by the concepts of security, sovereignty, and state. To 'desecuritise' is thus to devaluate the concept of security as such, to identify its problematic, or negative meaning. Politics, according to Wæver, has to be dissociated from the realm of security and sovereignty, since the latter never plays by the rules (Wæver, 1993:7). Sovereign security and the Political, in other words, stand in an external, rather than, as defined by Schmitt, in an internal relationship.

Wæver's conceptualisation of security as a 'speech act' and his concomitant critical evaluation of the effects of securitisation and de-securitisation are certainly a valuable and important contribution for our thinking about these terms. There is a strong appeal to the idea that if security itself is more of a problem than a solution, we should try to salvage as much as possible from its grip and ideally banish it from politics as much as possible.

However, there remain a number of conceptual and theoretical problems which need to be addressed.

Firstly, by theoretically separating sovereignty/security from politics, Wæver cannot address the internal relationship between these concepts. As the discussion of Schmitt's modernist script above demonstrated, politics is always enacting and reproducing the sovereign decision about friend and enemy, about who can partake in the political process and who is excluded. Thus, eligibility for 'politicisation' as Wæver's alternative to securitisation already always presupposes the status of the insider/friend. Therefore,

Wæver can never account for how this status can be achieved, how the access to the inside can be negotiated in a non-sovereign fashion.

Secondly, given Wæver's blind-spot with regard to the relationship between sovereignty and politics, the former is left 'untouched' to the extent that its relevance is tacitly acknowledged as a necessary background condition for the possibility of politics. Thirdly, there seems to be an assumption of conceptual stability at work in Wæver's argument, which fixes 'security' as always necessarily invoking sovereignty. Now, to some extent this is certainly plausible, as this is indeed part and parcel of the modernist script of political order. It is this order that, after all, dominates our thinking about politics and our (political) selves.

> The security of states dominates our understanding of what security can be, and who it can be for, not because conflict between states is inevitable, but because other forms of political community have been rendered almost unthinkable. The claims of states to such a monopoly of legitimate authority in a particular territory have succeeded in marginalising and even erasing other expressions of political identity - other answers to questions about how we are (Walker, 1990:6).

The cognitive and imaginative 'window of opportunity' left open by R.B.J. Walker in this citation is narrow indeed - an 'almost' qualifying the absolutness of 'unthinkable'. What follows is a peek through this gap, an exploration of possibilities we cannot yet fully formulate or implement.

Post-modernising Security

To start with, I would contend that security does not necessarily have to invoke 'sovereignty'. In fact, it did not always do so.

In the 14th century, 'security' was as much an issue as it is today. However, its meaning, conceptual history tell us, was a significantly different one. 'The securing of roads, in particular for merchants and pilgrims, became a major concern. It was in this context that the word 'secure' found its fixed place. Not only the Emperor, but even

more importantly, the respective princes considered the protection of the highways their duty and concluded treaties to this effect. Thus, the Dukes of Austria and Bavaria agreed (1375): "that they will protect and secure the roads everywhere"' (Conze, 1984:836; my translation).

Can this pre-modern definition of security help us formulate a post-modern version? Any such reconceptualisation must begin by acknowledging the presence of 'strangers' as the defining characteristic of post-modern societies. These are not only persons from other nations or cultures, these are also found in the increasing number of 'misplaced persons', of articulations of difference within societies, that no longer adhere to 'ruling' or 'hegemonic' discourses of identity.[11] It can finally be found in the 'mediated' or 'advertised' presence of the stranger in, say Bosnia, whose predicament as a human being we cannot escape (Shapiro, 1994). To acknowledge the presence and dignity of these persons is also to acknowledge the costs that the modernist script with its insistence on the friend/enemy distinction imposes upon them. Security in this context must refer to safeguarding the coexistence and intercourse of strangers, rather than the separation of friends from enemies. Security thus becomes the protection of the 'lines of communication', the 'roads' which enable such commerce and association. As in the pre-modern conceptualisation, 'security' is about the enabling and safeguarding of the exchange relations between strangers, rather than the protection of friends from enemies. It enables political conduct, not by delineating an inside from an outside, but by enabling the transversal flows across, indeed the transgression of, boundaries.

Given the internal relationships between security, the Political, and sovereignty, such a re-conceptualisation of one of these terms necessarily involves re-defining the other ones as well.

First, the Political can no longer be considered to be based on a sovereign decision between friend and enemy, inside and outside. Sovereignty gives way to *Exchange*, the pretense of stable identities and order gives way to a dynamic interplay of identity\difference. The Political now is the field of 'reciprocity, substitutability, and the

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[11] According to Bauman, this alienation is an integral tendency of modernity, see Bauman (1991: 200ff).

relaxation of control in order to produce expanded domains in which things can circulate' (Shapiro, 1991:448).

The Political, to paraphrase Heidegger, no longer concerns itself with sovereign 'Being' and its protection against difference, change, and anarchy. Instead, the Political operates in the realm of 'Becoming', as a project of exposure and transformation of subjectivity. Security thus cannot concern itself anymore with ontological security, that is, with the pretense of identity being able to remain identical with itself. Given the debt identity always owes to difference (Connolly, 1991, 1995), the former will always remain an incomplete project, a performance without a conclusion. Security therefore must concern itself with the safeguarding of this process, with protecting the 'roads and highways' through which this exchange can occur.

To forego the pretense of sovereign identity in a sense de-securitises security. This is what I tried to capture above with the term 'exposure'. Given the impossibility of ultimately securing identity, life as such is ultimately 'dangerous'.

> Life itself is essentially appropriation, violation, overpowering of what is alien and weaker, oppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation, and at least, at its mildest, exploitation - but why should one use just those words in which slanderous intent has been imprinted for ages? (Nietzsche, 1988: 207; my translation).

Even if we allow for Nietzsche's hyperbole here, the agonistic nature of life remains a central assertion. Martin Heidegger expresses it this way:

> By forcing a confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) with one's faith, ideas of nature, or ideals of political belonging, such decisions can wound, even kill, before they are complete in this duel - demanding that we defend, give-up or transfigure cherished beliefs and conceptions which order our lives. In confrontation, *what - *or rather *how - *we are is at stake (cited in Dillon, 1996:46)

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By accounting for the unavoidable contingency of identity - the what and how we are - redefining security implies the de-securitisation of security. Postmodern security thus is about averting the imposition of friend/enemy decisions on the plurality of life and to enable and regulate the confrontation of faiths, ideals, and beliefs.

Theory and Practice, or 'So what?'

As argued above, the re-definition of security cannot be conceived of without taking account of the concept's inherent relationship with sovereignty and statehood. To re-conceptualise security has significant repercussions for the latter concepts and the practices associated with them. If 'post-modern' security is responding to the impulse to exchange rather than sovereign control and authority, if such security is opposed to, rather than based on, the decision between friend and enemy, we obviously also need to re-think the way we organise 'states', or other forms of political order.

To discuss the ramifications or possibilities of post-modernising security within the context of national security and statehood thus seems exceedingly difficult, and running the danger of arguing for the dissolution of statehood without being able to imagine a different form of 'polity'.

Perhaps a more fruitful way to discuss the possibilities for - and *of* - postmodernising security should consider the realm in which exchange is the rule and assertions of sovereignty a always problematic exception: the *inter*-national society. Here, 'plurality is insinuated into the very existing of beings, so that being, at all, is itself plural and not merely composed of a plurality of beings' (Dillon, 1996:4). The *an-arche*, the absence of supreme authority that characterises this society entails that its order and structure is based on exchange rather than sovereignty. It is through the *mutual* recognition of state sovereignty that actors are constituted, and it is through the decentralised rituals of diplomacy that this mutual recognition is enacted. At the same time we need to recognise that sovereignty as the mediation of plurality and universality remains a double edged sword. There is always the possibility that the latter exceeds its

'containers' and 'spills over' into the plurality of the International. This 'spill-over' effect is perhaps best demonstrated and problematised with the example of NATO.

To chose the primary Western security institution for this discussion is obviously not coincidental. As Michael Dillon has elaborated, Western conceptions of security are deeply rooted in Western metaphysics (Dillon, 1996). One of the central aspects of the latter is arguably the 'obsession' with sovereignty, of a claim to sovereign knowledge and control over the world. In terms of inter-national politics, this is most clearly played out in the way the encounter of the West with the rest is coded and enacted. Borrowing from Roxanne Doty's study of British Foreign Policy, we might understand these Auseinandersetzungen as 'imperial encounters', a term 'meant to convey the asymmetrical encounters in which one entity has been able to construct "realities" that were taken seriously and acted upon and the other entity has been denied equal degrees or kinds of agency' (Doty, 1996:3). In other words, it is an instance in which sovereignty is enacted as supreme knowledge rather than in its legal instantiation of statehood. It is, as such, a denial of the plurality of being in the international society, and the reassertion of the knowable and manageable nature of the international system.

This epistemic sovereignty can be observed in different discursive formations: in NATO's enlargement debate as well as its diplomatic gestures towards Mediterranean states (Behnke, 1999a, 1999b (forthcoming)). Given the topicality of the former, I shall attempt a critical assessment of it in the terms outlined in this paper.

The enlargement of the North Atlantic Alliance is interesting in the context of this paper, since it constitutes an instant in which the decision between friend/enemy, between inside and outside, is temporarily suspended and re-negotiated. To admit new members into NATO thus presents a possibility for an exchange, or an *Auseinandersetzung* with NATO's cherished beliefs, ideal and conceptions. New members might inject new beliefs, ideals and conceptions, thus forcing the alliance to re-define its identity and thus to acknowledge the contingency of its world picture. As such, this would amount to the recognition that the end of the cold war has also affected a change in the self-image of the West and its relations with the rest of the world.

Any such expectations were deeply disappointed on March 12, 1999. Watching the proceedings in Independent, Missouri, one could not help but be amazed how much the rhetoric of the day was out of sync with the times The rhetoric employed by the representatives of the new member states was rife with allusions to the history of the Cold War producing a distinctly anachronistic ring in these days in which the past no longer holds any clues for understanding the present or the future. Above all, and this points to the central and perhaps most problematic aspect of NATO enlargement, the speeches and interventions on the occasion of the deposition of the membership documents re-presented an identity of the West as the sole and supreme site of Civilisation and History. Some of the rhetorical gestures are dramatic indeed, and even allowing for the hyperbole inherent in a historical event like this, reveal a lot about the world view about the West.

Thus, Poland's Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek is cited as comparing 'the importance of NATO accession to Poland's conversion to Christianity' (Erlanger, 1999:1). Somewhat more soberly he contended himself in his address with equating accession to a home-coming, 'Poland for ever returns where she has always belonged to the free World' Until 1989, he further states, Poland was 'forcibly excluded from the West', 'denied those values' that are defining the Western community of states (Geremek, 1999).

For the Hungarian Foreign Minister, Hungary is back in the family', NATO accession returns the country to 'her natural habitat'. 'It has been our manifest destiny to rejoin ... those with whom we share the same values, interests and goals' (Martonyi, 1999).

The significance of these proposition lies above all in the fact that they re-present and authorise the West as a sovereign presence and actor in international politics. The enlargement of NATO in effect re-produces this effect after the end of the cold war, thus denying the *inter*-national or inter-cultural logic of global politics. For opposed to the West appears an amorphous spatiality, still caught in the dark history of the 20th century. For if accession to NATO means 'that the Czech traumas of this century have been now relegated forever only to history', this also means that beyond NATO and the

West, these historical traumas are still very much alive. Russia's vast uncertainties (Erlanger, 1999:1), sinister ideologies, the stomping of 'alien boots' (Martonyi, 1999), can once again bring invasion and oppression to innocent countries.

The point here is not to evaluate the truth content of these statements. Rather, these propositions serve to illustrate in what way the enlargement of NATO serves to sustain a claim of sovereign identity and authority over inter-national politics. Once again a decision about friend/enemy is imposed upon the word, structuring the contingency and plurality of the inter-national society into a binary, manageable, knowable order with NATO as the proto-sovereign, instituted by, and institutionalising, this decision. Which means that exchanges with other cultures will be conducted under the precondition that NATO's truth will prevail. Different perspectives, different truths can thus be dismissed as 'misperceptions, misunderstandings, or mistrust' (Behnke, 1999b (forthcoming)).

To re-present NATO in this fashion after the end of the cold war, in times in which contingency and uncertainty are permeating all aspects of international politics. The irony about the current re-presentations of NATO and the West is that their insistence on sovereign distinctions might in fact undermine the alliance's longevity.

First, we might argue that it's universalist pretensions are becoming increasingly hard to swallow. Opposed by different articulation of civilisational and cultural identities in the rest of the world, the West 'needs to speak to it more often, and that will require it to be a little less insistent in seeing itself as the world's conscience or court of last appeal' (Coker, 1998:174).

Second, we might find that the insistence on a homogenous and self-identical West disables the alliance to deal with its internal contradictions and problems in a productive fashion. To maintain such a notion of the West simply as a means to exorcise the possibilities of internal disunity will hardly contribute to their solution.

And finally, to insist on the continuous self-identical sovereignty of the West in a post-modernised inter-national society might ultimately deprive NATO of credibility and authority. Turned into an 'acetic ideal' of continued purity and pre-eminence, and refusing to face the challenges of adapting to the pluralisation of post-modern times, the

West, and with it, the Atlantc alliance undermines the grounds on which to base its agency. 'The Alliance no longer speaks for history. It has no grounds of action on which to stand' (Coker, 1998:175).

Conclusion

To criticise and problematise NATO enlargement is certainly not the prerogative of critical theorists. One might arrive at such a conclusion from different starting points. However, in this paper this problematisation is not concerned with the rational and instrumental pursuit of national and international strategies by pre-established agents (Gaddis, 1998). My interpretation of NATO enlargement here is one of an episode in which the problems of modernist security policies in a post-modern world are forced into the open. Two aspects stand out in particular: the rarification of the West and thus, the Alliance into an ascetic ideal, and the 'preparation' of the rest of the world for NATO's (violent) interventions. These two aspects are dialectically related via the insistence on a Schmittean solution to NATO's post-cold war conundrum: to re-present the West as a referent space for its security agency. If the inside is constructed as purely inhabited by 'friends', an increasing number of 'strangers' will be written out of Western identity. With 'Eastern' nations and cultures this might pose less of a problem, given the (current) infatuation with all things Western. At some point, however, NATO and the West will have to address the relationship with the articulations of Islamic cultural identity within and beyond its borders. To insist on the singularity and constancy of Western identity seems a problematic strategy in this respect.

If the inside is purified of all contradictions and contingencies, then these are to be found on the outside only. Here is the site of the enemy in its various guises: unfulfilled history, violence, ideology, rogueness, irrationality.... Difference is essentialised into Otherness, and thus prepared for military intervention if need be. Recent US attempts to re-assign NATO to the fight against Weapons of Mass Destruction are indicative of this logic. In the end, the liberalist desire for a discriminatory concept of war might become

reality (Schmitt, 1988 [1938]).

To argue for the post-modernisation of security within the realm of the inter-national might thus in fact turn out to be a *conservative* effort. By insisting on the absence of supreme authority, it suggests that sovereignty remains subordinated to exchange, that the latter impulse is allowed to check the expansive tendencies within sovereignty. This might be all we can hope for in the foreseeable future.

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